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West's Security Agencies Stepping Up Cooperation

By Edward Cody
Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, April 2—Despite national rivalries and professional secrecy, Western European security agencies have significantly increased cooperation and intelligence-sharing in the fight against terrorism, according to security officials.

The coordination has intensified particularly over the past year among France, West Germany and Italy, the three European countries most affected by domestic and Middle East-related terrorism, the officials said. Although still limited and bilateral, it has produced results in a number of cases by making information obtained in one country quickly available to a neighbor's security services, they added.

In the past, such exchanges traditionally had moved slowly through European security bureaucracies fearful of exposing leads and sources to foreign services.

France's recent arrest of eight persons charged with planning terrorist bombings in Paris, for example, was made possible in part by information passed along from West German investigators, security officials here explained. Telephone numbers in a notebook carried by Mohammed Ali Hamadei, a Lebanese arrested at Frankfurt airport last January, helped French police focus on a Tunisian restaurant run by one of the alleged terrorists in Paris, they said.

In the other direction, information developed by French police from an abandoned car found loaded with arms has been sent to West Germany for use by police there in monitoring Iranian nationals suspected of trying to set up a logistics network for future terrorist operations, one security specialist reported.

Spanish security officials also have received increased information from their French colleagues on Basque extremists along the border. Spain's move to democracy has ended France's reluctance to deal with the security services of the former Spanish dictator Francisco Franco; but Paris' help for Madrid has also come as part of the general European effort to cooperate against terrorism.

On another border, French authorities recently expelled several Italians suspected of connections to Italy's Red Brigades group. In return, security officials here said, France has received information obtained by Italian services interrogating Bashir Khodr, a Lebanese arrested last January at the Milan airport with plastic exlosives.

Such intelligence-sharing long has passed through security and intelligence liaison officers or diplomats, posted in embassies. In the new atmosphere, some European countries have proposed tightening the arrangement by stationing their own liaison officers within security agencies of another country.

This would put a West German officer at the French Interior Ministry, for example, or an Italian with Belgian security police. It would mark a departure from traditional security police attitudes, which make secrecy such a strong principle that on some occasions information is withheld among agencies of the same country.

One European security official said the measure nevertheless could be adopted in the near future. But broader political considerations, including fears of allowing a "Big Brother" apparatus, have prevented installation of a multilateral security computer bank where agencies and border police from a number of countries could run immediate checks, he added.

Similarly, he said, political considerations have generated a cautious response to recent inquiries from Warsaw Pact countries, including the Soviet Union, for increased cooperation against terrorism. Such cooperation would present clear problems, such as conflicting definitions of terrorism or reluctance to pass any information to Soviet-allied security services. But one security official said the proposals are receiving careful consideration.

Even the cooperation level among agencies in specific Western European countries still largely depends on personal relationships and political atmospherics, the official said. Increasingly, however, the relationships have been laid down formally in written agreements as European governments faced the international nature of terrorism.

Italy signed such an accord with France last October and has been in contact with other European countries on the same subject. France and West Germany have reached agreement on a similar accord and are scheduled to sign it this month.

Interior or justice ministers from the 12 European Community countries have been meeting for some time to coordinate security policies.

These high-level meetings are designed to coordinate security policies rather than trade intelligence.

At the same time, officials said, they have created an atmosphere that fosters cooperation, including intelligence-sharing at an operational level.

U.S. security agencies also have participated in the increased intelligence-sharing and cooperation, the officials said, but bilaterally with each country.

Washington has advocated multilateral intelligence-sharing arrangements and creation of an antiterrorism intelligence pool. U.S. officials have suggested such an accord among Britain, France, Italy, Japan, West Germany, the United States and Canada.

But this idea has encountered reluctance among European governments, particularly France, which fear becoming associated by implication with U.S. policies they judge unwise.

Previous terrorism declarations by leaders of the seven nations have had little practical effect. At the May 1986 summit in Tokyo, for example, the Reagan administration won a pledge from the other six leaders not to export arms to countries that sponsor or support terrorism, citing Iran.

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